

CIA Order of Battle Conference
July 1970

25X1A

- 25X1A
- 11 Jun 70 [REDACTED] to DCI memo re Proposed Conference to Revise
Estimates of Strengths of VC/NVA Forces
- 12 Jun 70 [REDACTED] untitled piece re need to revise CIA estimates
of overall enemy strength and strength of forces in
Cambodia and border areas as of 20 Apr 70
- 12 Jun 70 Helms to Lt. Gen. Donald Bennett, DIA, memo re
Conference to Revise Estimates of Strengths of
VC/NVA Forces
- 15 Jun 70 Blind Memo re Revision of Intelligence Estimates of
VC/NVA Forces

SECRET

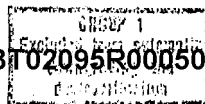
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
15 June 1970

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Revision of Intelligence Estimates of VC/NVA
Forces

1. The current military operations in Cambodia have unearthed a large number of captured documents which provide detailed information on the organization and strength of the enemy forces operating in Cambodia and/or along the border areas of South Vietnam. The documents are proving to be particularly valuable because they are providing information on units and areas about which our previous knowledge was quite scant. Our examination of the new evidence indicates that revision of the current estimates is imperative and that these revisions may be substantial.
2. Preliminary analysis suggests that the current estimates understate the strength of the enemy's Regular forces (Main/Local Forces and Administrative Service Troops) by something on the order of 30,000 men. An adjustment of this magnitude would mean an increase of about 15 percent in the current estimate.
3. It is important to note, however, that the larger part of the correction will be for the Administrative Services category. A good part of the correction will reflect the identification of previously unknown units, or units whose existence was known but without any idea of their personnel strength. It appears that the community's estimates of combat forces have been very close to the mark but that we have been understating the manpower requirements needed to maintain and support the combat effort, particularly for those support forces located in Cambodia. The adjustments to be made to the estimates of combat forces will run less than 10,000.

SECRET



~~SECRET~~

4. The following examples provide some very preliminary approximations of some of the adjustments that seem to be in order. The estimate for COSVN military components will probably be increased by about 15,000. Some 1,500 of these are personnel in previously unidentified sapper battalions. Another 4,500 are the personnel of three newly identified regiments that are responsible for the support and movement of infiltrating personnel coming into the COSVN area and also the large flow of sick and wounded leaving the area. In the B-3 front -- to the north of the COSVN area -- the documents provide strengths, for the first time, of the four Binh Trams, or logistics stations, known to be located in Cambodia and extending southward from Laos along the South Vietnamese border. These four units total about 3,000 men. Although the documents verify the estimated unit structure for combat forces in the B-3 front area, they also seem to indicate that their aggregate strengths have been underestimated by some 3,000-4,000 men.

5. These estimates are, of course, highly important to an understanding of enemy capabilities and a considerable amount of detailed analysis is in order before revisions can be officially made. To facilitate this work, Mr. Helms had directed that a conference of order of battle specialists be convened no later than 15 July 1970. The conference will be chaired by CIA. DIA, CINCPAC and MACV have been invited to participate.

6. Finally, it is interesting to note that apart from the issue of estimates of military forces, the captured documents are providing a considerable amount of detailed information on the structure and strength of COSVN's political apparatus. This was formerly estimated at 2,500, but the newly captured documents put its personnel strength at about 8,000. This figure includes a regiment of security troops subordinate to the Security Section (police).

~~SECRET~~

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 15 June 70	
TO: Ch/D/I <i>JA</i>			
ROOM NO.		BUILDING	
		<i>JP</i>	
REMARKS: <i>File OB conference</i>			
FROM: DD/OER BY-3			
ROOM NO. 4-F-18		BUILDING Hq.	
		EXTENSION 5001	

FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

12 JUN 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Lt. General Donald V. Bennett
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency
Department of Defense

SUBJECT : Conference to Revise Estimates of
Strengths of VC/NVA Forces

1. It has come to my attention that the large volume of documents being unearthed during the current operations in Cambodia provides convincing evidence that current estimates understate the strength of VC/NVA forces by a considerable margin. The recent airing of this issue in the press and the strong interest being expressed at the highest levels of this Government make it imperative that the question of revising our estimates be resolved as quickly as possible.

2. In my capacity as Director of Central Intelligence, I would prefer that our revisions of the current national estimates be made, if possible, with the participation of DIA as well as the field commands. To this end I plan to convene at CIA Headquarters a working level conference of order-of-battle specialists to begin no later than 15 July 1970. In addition to the participation of DIA, I would appreciate it if you would make the necessary arrangements for the participation of representatives from CINCPAC and MACV and such other organizations as you deem appropriate.

3. [REDACTED] will chair this conference. He can be reached on code 143, extension 5001.

/s/ Richard Helms

Richard Helms
Director

SECRET

Memorandum to Director, Defense Intelligence Agency from
the Director (SUBJECT: Conference to Revise Estimates of
Strengths of VC/NVA Forces)

CONCUR:

[REDACTED]

25X1A

Acting Deputy Director for Intelligence

11 JUN 1970
Date

DD/OER: [REDACTED]:ajs

Retyped ADDI:EWProctor:fbr (11 June 1970)

25X1A

Distribution:

Original and 1 - Addressee

1 - Director

1 - DDCI

1 - Executive Registry

1 - DDI

2 - OD/OER

1 - DD/OER

(1) Ch/D/I

1 - Ch/I/SV

SECRET

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO: Ch/D/I		
ROOM NO. 4-F-38	BUILDING Hq.	
REMARKS:		
FROM: DD/OER		
ROOM NO. 4-F-18	BUILDING Hq.	BY-3 EXTENSION 5001

FORM NO. 241
1 FEB 55

REPLACES FORM 36-8
WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)

DRAFT
I/SV [REDACTED]
12 June 1970

1. We have been examining the large number of documents captured by Allied forces in Cambodia since 20 April 1970. It is clear that we need to revise our estimates of both the overall strength of enemy forces and the strength of those forces in Cambodia and border areas as of that date.

STATINTL

2. Our preliminary analysis suggests that the current estimates understate the strength of the enemy's Regular forces by something on the order of 30,000 men. A figure of this magnitude would mean an increase of about 15 percent in this estimate. It is important to note, however, that the larger part of our correction will be for the Administrative Services category. This means that our estimates of enemy combat forces has been very close to the mark, but that we have been understating the manpower requirements needed to maintain and support the combat effort, particularly these forces located in Cambodia. It appears that our adjustment for combat forces will run less than 10,000.

3. Some examples: Our estimate for COSVN military components will probably be increased by about 15,000. Some ~~XXXXX~~ 1,500 of these are personnel in previously unidentified sapper battalions. Another 4,500 are

the personnel of three regiments that are responsible for the support and movement of infiltrating personnel coming into the COSVN area and also the large flow of sick and wounded leaving the area. Excluded from consideration in estimates for military forces is considerable detailed information on the structure and strength of COSVN's political apparatus. This was formerly estimated at 2,500, but on the basis of newly captured documents is estimated at about 8,000. This figure includes a regiment of security troops subordinate to the Security Section (police). In the B-3 front -- to the north of the COSVN area -- we have strengths of the four Binh Trans (Stations of the infiltration system extending southward along the border from Laos) for the first time. These are together 3,000 men. Although ~~XX~~ our unit structure for combat forces in the B-3 front area has been verified we appear to have underestimated their aggregate strengths by some 3,000-4,000 men.

4. Because these estimates are so important to our understanding of enemy capabilities, further detailed analysis is in order. To facilitate this work, Mr. Helms has directed that an order of battle conference be held no later than 15 July 1970. MACV and CINCPAC have been invited to participate along with CIA and DIA.

11 JUN 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
THROUGH: Acting Deputy Director for Intelligence
SUBJECT: Proposed Conference to Revise Estimates
of Strengths of VC/NVA Forces

1. The current military operations in Cambodia have unearthed a large number of captured documents which provide information showing that current estimates understate the strength of VC/NVA forces by a considerable margin. The understatement results in large measure from the identification of units previously unknown to the community. Although most of these units are administrative service or support types, the new evidence also shows that the current estimates of combat forces are also understated.

2. On 2 June Saigon press sources reported that MACV was raising its estimates of enemy forces in III Corps and adjacent Cambodian sanctuaries from 55,000 to 91,000 troops. This report has obviously attracted a great deal of attention in official Washington, particularly in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and with Mr. Kissinger. CIA has already been asked to provide Acting Secretary Packard with a preliminary analysis of the revisions required in the current estimates.

3. DIA's position on the press reporting of MACV's changes was that the reports contained nothing new and that DIA has not increased the strength of the overall enemy threat estimate. I was asked to coordinate this position and refused on the grounds that the new evidence makes revisions of our estimates imperative and that these revisions may be substantial in the order of 15-20 percent. I further informed DIA that this message would be loud and clear in our response to Mr. Packard.

4. DIA's reaction has been to suggest that a revision of the estimates is now in order and that this could best be handled by CIA convening a conference of order of battle specialists from DIA, CINCPAC and MACV.

5. The DIA suggestion seems to be a reasonable approach to revising our estimates. It would in the first instance be a further example of Agency initiative in resolution of national intelligence problems. Moreover, the community will have to face up to this question in very short order and the conference proposal has the not inconsiderable advantage of being done under our auspices rather than those of the VSSC Working Group. CIA sponsorship of the conference would also be of benefit to DIA in its relationships with the field commanders. Finally, I would note that the nature of the current problem and the marked improvement in our relations with MACV should mean that revised estimates could be achieved with much less of the wrangling and debate which characterized our conference in 1968.

6. For these reasons I recommend that CIA should agree to call the proposed conference. If you approve this recommendation, the attached memorandum to General Bennett, will initiate the proceedings.

25X1A

Deputy Director
Economic Research

Attachment:
Memorandum to General Bennett

Distribution:

Orig. & 1 - Addressee
1 - DDCI
1 - DDI
2 - OD/OEP
1 - DD/OEP
✓ 1 - Ch/D/I
1 - Ch/I/SV

DD/OEP [redacted] ajs/5001(11 Jun 70)

25X1A

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE
TO: Ch/D/I		
ROOM NO.	BUILDING	
REMARKS:		
<p>Your copy of the letter to General Bennett will be sent to you when it is signed by Mr. Helms.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[REDACTED]</p> <p><i>Start a file "Order of battle conference, July 1970."</i></p>		
FROM: DD/CER		NY-3
ROOM NO. 4-B-18	BUILDING Hq.	EXTENSION 5001
FORM NO. 241 1 FEB 55		REPLACES FORM 36-8 WHICH MAY BE USED.

STATINTL

(47)